

Saviours of Dishonour

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/14908089) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/14908089>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter , Will Graham & Hannibal Lecter , Will Graham & Will Graham's Dogs
Characters:	Will Graham , Alana Bloom , Hannibal Lecter , Will Graham's Dogs , Will Graham's Father , Jack Crawford , Jimmy Price , Brian Zeller , Margot Verger
Additional Tags:	Angst , Hurt/Comfort , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Crying , Muteness , Memory Loss , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , AU
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2018-06-11 Updated: 2018-06-14 Words: 11,133 Chapters: 5/7

Saviours of Dishonour

by [Tripawed](#)

Summary

Two years after Hannibal guts Will and goes on the run, Will is still living in Wolf Trap, alone and grieving for the friends and family he'd lost. After two years Hannibal returns.

Chapter 1

The dogs barking wakes him. For a moment he stays where he is under the covers. Praying that it's just a passing cat or fox and that the dogs will stop making their racket and he can go peacefully back to sleep. The noise continues.

Eventually, he peels the covers off his body. Feels the freezing air of the Virginia winter wash over him and heads out into the living room to deal with the dogs.

They are all clustered near the door, barking madly. He goes over shushing them as he does and peers through the window as he passes.

A figure of a man is silhouetted in the yard. Dread creeps over him and grabs the shotgun out of the hall closet before opening the door.

"This is private property." He calls as he steps cautiously outside, brandishing the gun, finger on the trigger ready. "What are you doing here."

The dogs swarm past him and head up towards the figure tails wagging. They are such poor guard dogs, first Georgia Madden now this. He takes another step towards the still silent figure. His feet cold on the frozen earth, cursing himself for not getting dressed.

"Hey," he says more harshly. "What's going on."

The figure jerks in response to his tone, and recoils away from him. The moon slides fully out from behind a cloud and Will stops dead in his tracks.

"Hannibal."

It's been two years since Hannibal vanished to Europe, two years since Muskrat Farm. He'd heard nothing. No contact, no sightings. Even Jack hadn't heard of any murders that might have fitted Hannibal's MO. After a year or so everyone had begun to settle down again, to relax. Now that stupor has just been blown away, spectacularly.

"Hannibal." He says again, fear and another emotion he can't quite place bubbling under his skin.

The man before him still doesn't speak, just stands, absolutely still, while the dogs swarm at his feet.

Will steps in closer, internally acknowledging that this could be a threat. "Hannibal." He demands. Then stops short as the man flinches.

"Hannibal," he repeats much more gently, "what's going on? Why are you back here? If Jack catches you.." he trails off, because what? What would Jack do? He edges closer warily. On the alert to run for it or shoot Hannibal somewhere non fatal if he should need to.

Hannibal takes a step backwards, his gait uneven and stumbling. Will pauses watching, *he's got a beard*, he thinks absently.

"Hannibal?" he says again, confused and a little alarmed, simple blanking isn't Hannibal's style. Mind games and trying to talk you into murdering a friend, Yes. Simply pretending not to know you, no. He looks at Hannibal, really looks at him, squinting in the darkness and feels the flicker of alarm bloom into a full blown fear under his skin. Hannibal is wearing normal clothes, ragged dirty ones. He's wearing jeans.

"Hannibal," he tries again, "are you alright? What's going on?" There is still no reply. It's absolutely freezing and Will can feel himself beginning to shiver even as he registers that Hannibal isn't even wearing a jacket, just a long sleeved shirt. Accepting that this might get him killed, he sighs, lowers the shotgun and beckons Hannibal towards the house. "You'd better come in, then."

Turning towards the house, he moves off ushering the dogs as he goes. He doesn't hear Hannibal follow but that doesn't mean much as the man needs a collar with a bell for the safety of everyone. He smiles at his own thoughts, mainly at the internal picture he has in his mind of Hannibal's face if he was presented with a collar and a bell. Undoubtedly the same quietly horrified expression that Will used to see when Hannibal used to turn up at his office and catch him each PBJ sandwiches at his desk.

Stepping back into the house he slides his hand down the wall to turn the lights on, "home, sweet home." He calls over his shoulder. Still nothing. Turning he sees that Hannibal is still standing like a particularly murderous scarecrow in his garden. "Hey," he calls, "come on. I don't have any desire to freeze to death. Get in here."

Nothing.

"Hannibal." He can hear the warning edge in his own voice, "come on."

Sighing under his breath, he pulls on his boots and goes back out into the night. It's beginning to drizzle and it's bone crackingly cold. Muttering viciously about prissy psychopaths who won't do anything the easy way, he stomps back over. "Hannibal." He says exasperated, reaching out for the man's arm. As soon as he makes contact Hannibal recoils, and makes the first sound that Will has heard from him tonight. A noise of denial deep in his throat. But still no words or violence.

Unease creeps over Will, "it's alright," he says his voice automatically dipping into the tone he uses on the dogs, especially when they are new. "You're alright, I'm not going to hurt you. Come on Hannibal." He adds, "we both know you're more likely to go down that path than me." There is no reply but by now he's not really expecting one. His heart hammers in his chest as the unease he'd been feeling blossoms into outright fear, *what has happened?*

Pushing down the fear, he focuses on the immediate necessities of getting them both and the dogs back indoors. "Alright," he soothes again, slowly wrapping an arm around Hannibal's shoulders and gently steering him towards the open front door. To his surprise Hannibal moves obediently, but is stiff and awkward under his hands. They make slow progress, and as the hobble across the yard and up to the door, Will tries to make sense of the situation.

Hannibal is back. He's wearing someone else's clothes. He's in Will's yard at 3.17 am. He's freezing and he won't say a word. Whichever he looks at it he can't add the few facts he knows into a scenario that make sense. "You always were hard to predict." He tells Hannibal. Maroon eyes, they look black in the dim light, slide across and peak at him from under a shaggy fringe, then dart away. The fear regroups, the redoubles when Will notices that Hannibal's hair is filthy. Even in the Chesapeake Ripper days, when Hannibal could only have been sleeping for about 20 minutes a week, Hannibal always look effortlessly put together. Seeing him dirty is like seeing a unicorn in a strip club, it just doesn't fit into his world view.

"Come in." He says when they reach the threshold and Hannibal seems to balk at the doorway. "No precious carpets so no need to worry about your boots."

He eases them both into the house, does a quick head count on the dogs and shuts and locks the doors. "Coffee?" He asks into an awkward silence. He heads to the kitchen without waiting for a reply. Uses the few minutes alone in his little kitchen to panic and wonder.

Armed with coffee, he heads back into the living room, praying that he finds Hannibal arranging the corpse of one of his neighbours, preferably the guy from number 56, into some kind of display with a shit eating grin on his face and some kind of terrible, *erm.. sorry, witty* pun.

Nope, Hannibal is standing exactly where Will left him, just inside the doorway. He's rocking on his feet, shifting his weight from one foot to the other and back again. *Nervous, or cold?* Will thinks.

"Coffee," he repeats and tries to offer the mug to Hannibal, who looks at it as though it might be a bomb then back at Will, then back at the mug. There is a very long pause. Will slowly holds the mug further out, closer to Hannibal. He can see the other man's nostrils flicker, *weirdo*, and then hears the other man's stomach growl. "Hungry," he asks. Now he considers it, Hannibal's face looks thinner than when he last saw it. "I can make you something if you like? It won't be up to your standard but if you're hungry..."

He continues to hold the mug out and after a few long minutes, while minutes, Hannibal's hands creep up. They pause before they make contact with the mug, and Will can hear Hannibal's convulsive swallowing and his breathing comes quicker. Alarmed Will gently shoves the mug into Hannibal's hands. "Got it?" He asks. Then steps back once he's sees Hannibal's hands close around the porcelain.

As soon as he's out of arm's length, Hannibal brings the mug to his lips and begins to gulp the coffee down as though he's afraid it'll vanish any second.

"Ok," Will holds his own coffee out, he hadn't really wanted it to begin with, "want this one too?" He watches a little dismayed at the suspicion that appears on Hannibal's face. "Just coffee." He adds lamely into the silence. He sets it down on the nearest surface, handle pointing towards Hannibal. "Yours if you want it."

Leaving the room he goes in search of his glasses, despite how little he physically needs them he need the psychological comfort they provide him with. On his return he finds Hannibal

still standing exactly in the doorway, gazing at the cooling coffee. Battling an urge to return to bed and pull the covers over his head, Will goes to him. Tugs the empty mug out of his hands and talking advantage of being close enough to touch Hannibal steers him to the couch and hands him the other mug.

“Ok, ok, ok. I suppose the next stage is a shower. Right?” He addresses the top of Hannibal's head, “right,” he answers his own question.

Leaving Hannibal on the couch, he goes to turn the water on and let it heat.

He heads back, takes the mug, now empty, out of Hannibal's grasp. “Come on.” he tugs gently at Hannibal's arm and leads him towards the bathroom. “Ok,” he says, once they reach the little room, “towels are here, soap and stuff in there, razors are in the cabinet.” he exits the bathroom and heads back to the kitchen to wash up the mugs. That done he goes back to comfort the dogs and try to get them to resettle for what remains of the night. 4.01 am he has a class at 9.30, if he goes back to bed right now he could get 2, maybe 3 hours sleep before he has to get up for class. He runs a hand through his hair and goes to find sheets for the fold out couch upstairs. He digs out a set with the worst pattern on he can find, it'll no doubt help Hannibal settle in, then goes to give Hannibal the grand tour.

He taps on the bathroom door, but there is no response. He taps again. “Hannibal?” The sound of the water hitting the walls doesn't sound as though there is a body in the shower, “having trouble?” he calls.

Stealing himself to be murdered, an imagining his own tombstone or obituary, *Here lies Will Graham, He startled a Psychopath*, he eases the door open a crack and spies Hannibal, still standing precisely where he left him. *Well shit*. He has a moment where he genuinely considers closing the door and just going back to bed, if Hannibal wants to stand motionless all night who is he to deny him the opportunity. It's not like Hannibal would have come running to his rescue at any point, in the end though it's not in his nature to deny aid if he can.

“Hey,” he says as he pushes the door wide open, not wanting to bring the obituary to life by sneaking up on Hannibal. “Need a hand.”

He really has to force back irritation, it's not a natural response it's covering unease, even he knows this, but having Hannibal acting so unnaturally is seriously wiggling him out.

Hannibal is still standing his hands clasped in front of him.

“Come on,” Will says, for approximately the thousandth time tonight. “Let's get you cleaned up and into bed.” *Just like one of your strays*. He tells himself. He reaches out when Hannibal doesn't move and tugs his shirt out of his pants, Hannibal goes rigid under his hands. “Whoa, it's alright, you can't shower with your clothes on, get these off and head into the shower and i'll throw your stuff into the wash, get you some clean stuff. Mine isn't going to fit you really, but better that walking about the place naked. You fed the dogs human flesh, remember, so you don't get to come whining to me if they-” he pauses when he feels Hannibal trembling. Guilt and dismay flood his veins. “I'm joking,” he says weakly, absolutely floored that Hannibal seems afraid, “they won't hurt you, they would hurt a fly. Wimps the lot of them.”

He gently pushes until Hannibal is sat on the closed lid of the toilet and goes back to gently undoing the shirt. "Alright? Is this ok? You can take over if you want?"

He undoes all the buttons and goes to peel the shirt off, when it gets caught around Hannibal's wrists. "Only you would button the cuffs of your shirts so you can't just take them off," he says as he starts feeling for the buttons. His fingers don't find small buttons but instead meet wire. He pulls Hannibal's arm up and they both rise, pulling back the shirt sleeve all become clear.

Thick wire, the kind mostly used to make fencing is wrapped around Hannibal's wrists.

"Fuck," he says succinctly. "Stay here."

He hurries off to get the wire cutters from his tool box and the first aid kit, he'd seen blood. His mind is a blank, he should be questioning things he knows distantly, but higher reasoning has vanished in the face of Hannibal's battered wrists.

He returns, with just enough presence of mind to keep the wire cutters out of view, whatever has happened, reappearing waving essentially a pair of scissors in the air is not a recipe for a smooth outcome for them all. "I'm going to need to cut this off," he says, having to force himself to keep his voice level.

It takes him a few minutes, and he feels Hannibal flinch several times as he clippers touch against raw flesh and he has to wriggle them into better positions, but eventually he gets the wire into two bits. He pauses, he's going to have to pull the wire free, in some places it's embedded in the flesh.

It takes him nearly ten minutes to gently tease the wire free, by the end of it there is blood dripping from freely bleeding wounds and onto the tiles of his bathroom floor.

Sighing with relief, Will sits back on his heels, thankful that the gruesome task has been completed. "Let's get that shirt off, then you can hop in the shower," he narrates himself as he does with his dogs, reminding himself to speak in a normal tone of voice and not the baby voice he uses on his dogs. He pulls the shirt off and tosses it out into the hallway, and takes the hem of the tee shirt underneath and begins to ease it upwards.

As the t-shirt is removed it reveals the body underneath and Will stands clutching the thin material in his hands. Hannibal is covered in wounds. Cuts and bruises. Swallowing and feeling his eyes burn, Will throws the t-shirt out into the hall with the other shirt and struggles to keep his voice level.

"What happened," he whispers, not expecting an answer but really wanting one. His hands shake as he reaches for Hannibal's boots, he grabs the left one and undoes the laces, then tugs it off. Will feels the blood drain out of his face when he sees the state of Hannibal's foot, no nails and very little in the way of skin still intact. Swallowing, he looks up, "sorry." He cuts the laces on the other shoe and pulls it as wide as he can before he eases it off. He is relieved to see that there is slightly more skin left on Hannibal's right foot.

“Can we get your pants off?” he asks. Then stammers, “Not in a, not in a bad way, nothing-yeah, you're gonna need a shower, and we should take a look, if you have any other injuries. Do you have any more injuries?” he asks, shaking his head. Hannibal shakes his back. Will pauses, “No? Or are you just copying?”

Easing Hannibal onto his feet, Will undoes his belt and due to the size of the jeans they slide down Hannibal's legs at once. Will gently leads Hannibal towards the shower, so that he has to step out of the jeans and as soon as they are on the floor, Will kicks them out of the door towards the rest of the laundry. Due to the length of time the shower has been running the water has gone from hot to lukewarm. *Better than nothing though*, he reasons as he urges Hannibal into the stall. “Shampoo,” he picks up the bottle and presses it into Hannibal's hands, “shower gel.” He points at the second bottle. “I'll be right back.” He picks up the laundry and throws it into the machine. He doubts that the shirt will survive the trip through the wash but it's worth a shot. Probably.

He grabs some clean clothes, sweats, old t shirts and underwear. Everything soft and broken in. Easy to wear when not well and larger than the original owner of the clothes.

Then he heads back to Hannibal. He dreads seeing Hannibal standing numbly under the water, but to his relief now that Hannibal has his hands free he seems more inclined to take some action on his own behalf. Will drops the clothes onto the still closed lid of the toilet. “Clothes here,” he says, “come and get me if you need me.”

He retreats swiftly, back to the living room and pulls Buster into his lap. He cuddles the dog, staring at the wall, blankly trying to decide what the best course of action is. He should call Jack, or at least the police. Hannibal is dangerous, on the most wanted list. He's tried to kill Will himself on several occasions. He's also saved Will on several occasions, granted Will'd normally only been in danger because Hannibal had organised it.

Sighing, Will sits back, hugs Buster a little tighter to his chest. This Hannibal isn't his Hannibal. He's vulnerable and Will can't bring himself to consider turning him in. Not after whatever had happened to him. Not without learning the truth of what's been done.

He's brought out of his reverie by the soft pad of bare feet on wooden flooring. He turns and Hannibal stands just out of reach, his arms wrapped around himself as though he's cold or physically holding himself together. Will feels pity obliterate the anger that should be there at the thought of having to hold yourself together, when he sees the bloody footsteps that Hannibal has left.

“Sit,” he says patting the couch next to him. “Sit down.”

Hannibal obeys, and Will tugs a blanket of the back of the couch and drapes it around Hannibal's shoulders. *I need to get a picture*, he thinks, *if Hannibal returns to normal and gets a bit stabby, a picture of him in an Iggy Pop t-shirt will probably kill him from the embarrassment.* “I'm going to get the first aid kit.” He says aloud.

When he returns with it he sits at Hannibal's feet and concentrates wholly on smoothing anti bacterial cream over the damaged flesh and applying dressings over the raw wounds to protect them. “Done.” He announces, his eyes are gritty with exhaustion and his back is

aching from the position he's been in while he dresses Hannibal's feet. "Do the other winds need dressing?"

Hannibal shakes his head, slowly.

Will looks closer and realises that Hannibal is almost asleep. "Come along, sleepyhead. Bedtime." He puts Hannibal in his own bed, it's now 6.22 too late to go back to bed himself, and draws the covers over the other man's thin frame. He turns the light off as he leaves, but flicks it back on when he sees Hannibal startle. In the restored light Hannibal reaches out to touch the walls, smooths a hand over the bedding. Reassuring himself that it's all really there, that he's there. Not wherever he was before.

Shaking his head to force away the images his *gift* is trying to dredge up, Will leaves the lights on and goes for his own shower. He dresses and walks the dogs on autopilot, mins churning over the moral dilemma that faces him. He knows what he should do, his training as a police officer calls to him. But as he looks in on Hannibal before he heads off to teach his class he can't help but think, *I've missed you*.

The day passes slowly, so interminably slowly. He spends most of it checking his phone for messages, from Alana telling him that Hannibal has been sighted, or Jack demanding that he join the hunt. Or even from Hannibal, it's not like he ever changed his number. Hannibal could have called him anytime. He just never did.

He leaves the second his last class is over. It's only when he's home that he realises that he didn't give an assignment. *Fuck it*. He thinks as he gets out of the car.

He pauses outside his own home. Debating with himself, he doesn't even know what the best outcome is. If Hannibal is there then it's a problem because *Hannibal is there*, however if he's left then it's a problem because then *Hannibal is gone*.

Steeling himself he opens the door.

Chapter 2

The house is quiet when he enters there is a slight delay before the dogs flood over to him, covering him in kisses and happy snuffles, telling him that Hannibal or someone is home.

“Hannibal,” he calls, just in case last night had been exhaustion affecting the other man. Perhaps Hannibal is now completely back to normal and they can have a mutually enjoyable evening trying to foil each others dastardly schemes, like a cannibalistic version of Pinky and the Brain. “Which one would I be?” He muses aloud, as he goes in search of his murderous roommate.

He hears a quiet scuttling noise and finds Hannibal edging into the room, his back pressed to the wall, sliding around the doorframe.

“Hey,” he says, “you're here, I mean up?” He pauses feeling foolish in the face of Hannibal's continued silence. As he watches Hannibal begins to sway on his feet again, shifting his weight from foot to foot. *Shit, his feet.*

“Sit down,” Will says into the silence and feels bad when Hannibal flinches, “sorry, but let's get you off your feet. Can I check them?”

Hannibal sits down on the sofa and his hands twitch towards the blanket Will had dropped onto him last night, but he pulls his hands back and knots them in his lap.

“Here.” He drops the blanket back over Hannibal's thin shoulders. It hurts in the vicinity of his heart when he sees how Hannibal curls his hands into the material, clutching it to him as though it'll be torn away any second. “It's ok, that's yours. Alright? You can keep it.” He doesn't get a response, but he can see Hannibal's eyes flickering under the weight of his bangs. “Hungry? I'm starving, could be bothered to get lunch. Did you grab yourself something from the fridge or-” he trails off at Hannibal's vehement head shake. “No? Oh... that's, yeah? I wish you had, I mean I don't like to think of you going hungry.” Will stops dead as Hannibal finally makes proper eye contact. There is such dread in his eyes that it takes Will's breath away and he tries to mentally rewind the conversation to work out what he said wrong. “What? You think I'm mad cos you didn't eat?” Hannibal's shoulders go taut, and Will knows he's on thin ice somehow but even his imagination is letting him down. “I'm not mad.” He says as earnestly as he can, willing Hannibal to listen. “I not mad. Let's just get us both some dinner and then we'll both feel better, right?” Hannibal gives the barest nod and Will accepts that it's the best he's going to get.

“Why don't you come and sit in the kitchen with me while I make dinner. It'll be like old times, won't it.” He grins, half remembering those times sitting in Hannibal's kitchen in the armchair while Hannibal flitted about creating art of food. Out of human corpses. *Tasty, tasty corpses.* He stifles his own inappropriate laughter, but it dies at the confusion on Hannibal's face.

“Do... Hannibal, you know who I am, don't you?” He asks his heart clenching in his chest.

There is real panic on Hannibal's face now, and Will understands. *Oh, no. No.*

He ushers them all into the kitchen, feeds the dogs and gets Hannibal settled into a chair, so he can keep the weight of his feet.

Grabs a pen from a drawer and starts to make a list while opening the door of the fridge to look at the sad contents.

“Chilli?” He asks, as he writes, slippers, pain killers and bandages on the back of an envelope.

He leaves the list and starts getting a pan and heating oil to brown the ground beef. Over the smell of cooking meat he says, “I’m Will, Will Graham. We used to be....er.. colleagues, I guess would be the closest approximation of things?” *Or not.* “You’re Hannibal, you remember that.” Hannibal rolls his eyes and Will almost drops the knife he’s using to chop onions. “Ok, well I guess so. Hey, if I move the chair closer can you open these can for me? Yeah, thanks. That’s a big help.” To his surprise the words of praise, as off hand as they had been, cause Hannibal to sit a little straighter in his chair, there’s a small smile on his face. Making a mental note to use please and thank you more often around the other man, Will adds the beans and the spices to the mixture then dumps the lid on the pot and turns back to Hannibal. “Feet?” He asks. The smile vanished and Hannibal squares his jaw, swallowing tightly as though Will means to torture him. *Shit.*

He feels every flinch of pain from Hannibal like a physical blow, can’t prevent himself from muttering, “sorry, sorry, sorry,” throughout the whole ordeal. By the end he isn’t sure who is more distressed, Hannibal, himself or the dogs.

“Dinner?” He asks, and Hannibal’s belly growls loudly at word. “Yeah, dinner.”

It’s hard to watch Hannibal eat, his Hannibal had impeccable manners, he’d probably stab someone for using the wrong fork. He probably *has* done so. This Hannibal curls his body protectively around the bowl and wolfs the contents down, when he’s done he scrapes every last trace out sauce out, then runs a finger around the inside of the bowl, before looking longingly at the remainder of the chilli.

“A little more,” Will warns, “not because I begrudge you, but if you eat too much too soon I’m worried you’ll make yourself ill.”

After dinner he settles Hannibal on the couch with his blanket. “I’m just heading to the store for some stuff.” Hannibal goes still. “Just groceries and clothes for you. I’ll be back soon, alright? Here,” he grabs his laptop and loads it up, “I’ve got some movies and stuff in this, probably not your thing but have a look. There’s YouTube and stuff as well.”

He shows Hannibal how to navigate, and stays to watch for a few moments feeling some of the horror and tension leave him as he comes learn the greatest lesson for exhausted caregivers, that TV is the greatest force for good in the known universe. Leaving Hannibal watching cooking shows, *the more things change*, he heads out to the car with his list.

He makes it to the store and gets the stuff he needs, groceries, snack foods for Hannibal, toiletries for Hannibal, clothing for Hannibal. Pays, bags everything up and heads out to the car. The drive back is too long, the thoughts whirl around in his head, *what's happening, what's happened*. When Hannibal had been gone, he'd been able to think of Hannibal as living it up somewhere, free and uncompromising as he'd ever been. Now he knows that he'd been wrong. It shouldn't upset him, Hannibal is no saint. Whatever has been done to him he's probably given back at least as much in terms of general karma. But it does. It hurts. Deep in his chest it aches. His Hannibal is gone. Maybe he's never coming back.

As he pulls up in his drive, the ache in his throat becomes overwhelming and a sob slips out.

Alone in the car, he cries for everything. Abigail, Hannibal, Jack, Hannibal's victims. Himself. Everything.

Eventually he heads back inside, having cried himself out, his eyes itchy and sore. Hannibal looks pleased to see him and his doubts slide away.

Then he sees what's on the screen. It's just as he suspected TV is the greatest force for evil in the entire world. The entire universe. *What the hell. Oh, oh god. Oh dear god in heaven is that?* "My little pony?" He gasps utterly appalled. *He's a brony.* "Are you a brony?" He asks. *This is not Hannibal, oh my god.*

Hannibal looks up at him and his body language is changing at the realisation that Will has been crying. He looks... sad? Upset at least. "It's alright," Will blurts, "it's alright." It's becoming his favourite lie.

Chapter 3

Leaving the next morning is hard, Hannibal is a huddled lump on the sofa the blanket over him, covering him almost completely, a few tufts of grey, blonde hair poking out of the top.

"I'm off to work," he tells the lump, "I'll be back around three. I'm gonna call around lunchtime," he puts his old phone down on the coffee table. "Don't answer it unless it says 'Will' ok? Got that?" Hannibal's sleepy face appears and he nods. "Don't forget to get some food when you want it?" He gets another nod, firmer this time, more definite. "Good, that's good." He gives into the urge he's been battling for the better part of two days now and ruffles the ashy, blonde hair in front of him. To his surprise Hannibal butts into the touch like a cat. Seeking more contact and Will feels the now familiar mix of dismay and elation. Dismay because *his* Hannibal would have bitten his hand off if he'd tried to pet him, and elation because he's so scared of messing this up, so scared. But if Hannibal is getting more comfortable around him then at least he can't be making such a bad job of it? *Can he?*

Sighing, then hurriedly pasting on a fake smile, "see you later, don't answer the phone unless it says 'Will'."

Then he leaves, before he gives into the temptation to call in sick.

The morning lasts at least three lifetimes, he expects the heat death of the universe to arrive before lunchtime does. He's erratic and grumpy with the students, it's not their fault but he's so worked up he can't help himself. He's riding a literal emotional rollercoaster, going up his heart sings, *Hannibal's back, he's here, he's alive*. But then the downward section calls and he remembers *Hannibal doesn't know him. Doesn't remember him*.

When the minute hand on the clock clicks onto 12.30 he dismisses his students and growls at them until not even the bravest dare to come and ask him for help.

His hands tremble as he pulls his phone out and dials. The buzz of the connecting call is loud in his ear and Hannibal doesn't pick up, the phone cuts off and he curses and calls right back. In his mind he can picture Hannibal carefully checking the screen for the right name, *Christ, can he remember how to read?* Then fumbling with an unfamiliar phone. Figuring it out, however he looks or behaves Hannibal is a smart man, Will twitches his leg up and down in agitation, then with a click, the phone is answered.

"Hannibal," he gaps a surge of relief running through him, "I hope you're ok, have you eaten?" he can hear Hannibal's breathing and it brings such a visceral level of comfort that he's almost overwhelmed, his body sags under the relief of tension even as tears prick at his eyes. *What is he doing? Can't cope being away from Hannibal for a morning? Survived two years but three hours feels like it's going to last forever, be insurmountable. So hard to be with him though, when he's so different. A stranger wearing a beloved face*. At his own thoughts, *beloved*, Will feels his heart sink. *Shit*. "Hannibal," he says to distract himself, "I hope you're alright, I miss you, I missed you when you were gone. You've been so far away from me and I'm glad you're back. Whatever happens next, I want you to remember that,

please.” He hears a rustling noise as something is rubbed across the speaker of the phone and takes it as agreement. “Thank you, I have to hang up now, alright? I’ll be home soon, around four. Eat if you want to, and there are books and stuff. Stay away from the files on the desk, please.” The rustle comes again and he chuckles, but the sound is wet in his ears, “Bye, Hannibal, I’ll be home soon.” It takes everything he has to hang up, but he does. Then emails his head of department asking for cover to be arranged for the afternoon sessions for the rest of the week, mental health time, he writes. It’s true he reasons, just not necessarily his own.

Alana approaches him after class, “Hi, Will,” her pretty face is alight with pleasure at seeing him, “how are you?”

“Fine,” he says hurriedly, looking past her towards his car, “I’m fine, you?” he asks belatedly.

“I’m fine.” She falters, “Are you in a hurry?”

“Huh? Oh, just long day, the dogs have been a little neglected of late too, just been putting off some stuff around the house too, you know?” *Shut up*, he tells himself, *don’t make her suspicious*.

“Oh, that’s a shame, I was hoping we could meet for a drink? I have some things to discuss?”

“Oh?” he echoes, feeling panic claw at his throat.

“You know, work and so on.”

Right, he tells himself, *nothing important if she had heard Hannibal was close she’d tell him to protect him*. Sickness washes over him, followed by shame.

“Yeah,” he says weakly, “maybe next week? I’m trying to have reduced hours this week, you know get a bit of a break?”

“Are you unwell?”

“No, no, nothing major, not encephalitis or anything just in need of a bit of R and R.”

“It’s been a tough few days.”

“You have no idea.”

“Exam season,” she trills and he almost laughs at her naivety.

She hugs him and he holds her back, then makes a beeline for the exit glad for once that he has poor social skills as it means no one else tries to stop him.

“Honey, I’m home,” he calls as he steps into the house, relief at finally being home overwhelming everything. The dogs swarm over as usual and he holds the door open so they can go out, petting them as they nuzzle at him on their way into the yard. Hannibal follows them, up as far as Will rather than into the fresh air. Hannibal reaches out and makes contact voluntarily touch the side of Will’s face with one long finger and Will can’t prevent himself

from cupping the searching hand between both of his. "I missed you," he repeats. "I missed you."

Hannibal grins then, shy but definitely pleased, and taps his own chest with his free hand.

"You missed me too?" Will asks. "Been bored without me?"

Hannibal rocks a hand and gestures at the dogs.

"They've been keeping you company? Yeah, they are good dogs like that." He lets go of Hannibal's hands and moves toward the kitchen stripping off the tie as he goes. "I'm gonna make a start on dinner, it'll take a while to cook, want to sit with me?"

He heads into the kitchen and begins preparing ingredients, Hannibal joins him and for a moment the years roll back and it could be as though none of this had ever happened. Grief constricts Will's chest and he has to lay the knife down on the counter and breathe. He feels a hesitant touch to his shoulder and when he turns Hannibal is next to him, concern written across his features.

"It's ok," he says, "it's alright." He struggles to put a brave face on things, somehow he's frightening Hannibal and that's not ok. Breathing in deeply through his nose and out through his mouth he forces himself to relax and smile reassuringly. "I'm fine."

They make dinner in silence and Will leaves the stew to simmer on a low heat while he gets dressed into rough clothes.

"I'm going to take the dogs for a walk. Want to come?"

Hannibal nods, eagerly and Will digs out a coat, hat and gloves for him to wear. It's getting dark early in the evenings now it's winter so he doesn't worry about Hannibal being spotted, especially bundled up like the Michelin man. They walk through the woods for an hour and it's only when Hannibal starts to lag that Will remembers his feet.

"Shit, sorry. Hannibal I forgot about your feet. Come on, let's get you home. Can you make it back or shall I go and get the car for you?"

At his words, Hannibal goes pale and grabs Will's arm. Will stares into his friend's pale face and feels the swell of sadness at his friend's distress that bubbles constantly under the surface now. "What's wrong?" He asks. Hannibal clutches at his sleeve and looks pleadingly at him, Will swallows back nausea. "Don't like the woods?"

Hannibal shakes his head.

"Ok, don't want me to leave you here on your own?"

Shake.

"I could leave the dogs with you?"

Shake.

“Ok, I would come back. You know, you know that right?” He tries to keep the bitterness out of his voice. “I'm not the one that left last time.” Hannibal's eyes widen and he gnaws on his lip and Will feels shame at his words. “Sorry, sorry that wasn't fair of me. Come on, we'll take it slowly home, ok. Together. When we get in we'll have a hot chocolate. Do you like hot chocolate?”

Hannibal doesn't let go of his sleeve but his face relaxes a little and he nods.

“Good,ok. Hold my hand?”

Hannibal relinquishes his death grip and takes the hand Will is holding out, wriggling his fingers enticingly, and holds tight.

Clearly he's rattled about the idea of being ditched in the woods. Without any real way of asking Hannibal, Will has more questions than answers and the mystery is grating on his already frazzled nerves.

Once they get home he sits Hannibal on the sofa and checks and changes the bandages on his feet. Trying to see if there has been any healing. Guilt clawing at him when he sees that there hasn't. The bandages are blood stained and Will rewraps the injured feet gently after smoothing on the antibiotic creams. “Wait here,” he says and goes to fetch the slippers he'd bought the previous day. In a moment of mischief he'd gone for a set of lurid green fake fur monstrosities and when he brings them back into the room he's delighted by the look of horror on Hannibal's face. “Come on,” he soothes, “it'll be more comfortable for you poor feet, and you'll still be the terror scourge of the FBI even wearing fluffy monster feet slippers.”

With only relatively minor pouting Hannibal slides his feet into the slippers and when he gingerly gets to his feet the relief on his face is evident.

“Better?” Will asks and Hannibal nods.

The rest of the evening passes in the routine that Will is quickly becoming accustomed too, he serves dinner, they eat it then he grades papers as Hannibal dozes on the sofa watching cooking shows on the laptop. He gets Hannibal showered and all his wounds treated and gets him into the spare room, settled onto star wars print sheets.

He feels like he's only just dropped off when terrifying screams wake him. He catapults himself out of bed, his heart pounding, completely confused. Trying to work out what on earth is going on. Then it all clicks, *Hannibal*.

He dives up the stairs and into the spare room, Hannibal is tucked into the smallest ball he could ever imagine such a large man being able to fold into. *He's flexible*, a distant part of his mind notes. He reaches out to the wailing figure and as soon as his hands make contact the noise cuts off and if possible the figure folds into itself even further.

“Hannibal,” he whispers into the ringing silence, “it's me, it's will. It's just Will, your Will. You're ok, you're safe, i won't let anything happen to you.” He rubs carefully at the tense shoulders and keeps up a soothing rhythm until he feels Hannibal's body begin to uncurl.

Hannibal's face appears from out of the huddle of limbs and Will feels his heart break at the sight of tears.

"Oh, Hannibal." he says as his own voice catches. "Love, what's wrong?"

There is no reply but Hannibal's face seems to clear, some of the terror leaches out of his eyes and he huddles in closer to Will.

"Did you have a nightmare?"

The nod against his chest smashes what remains of his heart into smithereens. Fighting not to cry along with Hannibal Will swallows hard and rubs at his face.

"OK," he mutters, "OK, no, I can't, this is..." he feels Hannibal flinch, "no, no, honey, no, it's OK, not you. I'm sorry, I'm making everything worse. But it's OK, i know what I've got to do." He sighs, "Daddy is just gonna love this." he sighs.

He doesn't get back to sleep that night. It takes several hours to calm Hannibal, at every attempt to return to his own room Hannibal sits up or tries to follow until at last Will bows to the inevitable and curls into the bed next to him.

He calls in sick early, before Hannibal is even awake and goes to make himself a coffee, preparing himself for the phone call to follow. *God if Hannibal ever gets his senses back he's going to owe me big time for this.* He muses as he reaches for the phone.

"Bill Graham."

"Hi, Daddy."

"Willy, my boy, my boy, how are you, honey?"

"I'm ok, dadd-" his breath hitches.

"Don't sound it, boy, What's wrong?"

"Daddy, I need to come home and bring a friend with me."

"You in trouble with the law, Willy?"

"Technically I am the law, Daddy."

His father grunts down the phone at him, unimpressed, "Willy?"

"Kinda, I mean no one knows about my friend but I think there is a problem. I don't know all the details but I think he was kidnapped and tortured." It feels awful to say, the truth of it cuts so deep that he can't prevent a sob from slipping free.

"Easy there, Willy. Come on, boy, you know you're always welcome down here. And there are no neighbours for a good long while, you bring your friend along here and we'll work things out. Just like we always have, right boy?"

Will gulps, relieved even at almost forty to have an adult take control of the situation.

“Thanks, Daddy.”

“Your friend alright to travel?”

“I think so, I don't really know Daddy, he won't speak. I don't know if I'm making things better or worse.”

His father grunts, “Yeah, trauma can do that to a guy, saw plenty of it back in the day, when you were just a kid. You probably don't remember much of it. And as for making things better or worse, if they stay calm you're helping, otherwise it's worse.”

“He has nightmares, and I can't help him.”

“No, no you can't.” his father agrees and it's not what he wants to hear. He has the strangest desire to snipe back at his Dad in a way he hasn't felt since he was a teenager.

He resists the urge and says, “We'll set off tonight, Daddy. Last night was tough and I think it'll be easier to nap today and leave in the evening.”

“Stealthier too,” his father adds, dry as a bone.

“Yeah,” he agrees on a sigh, “Love you Daddy, See you soon.”

“Love you too, boy.”

Chapter 4

Persuading Hannibal to leave takes a while, it takes him about half an hour to get the other man to climb into the car and settle. In the end he puts the dogs in first which seems to settle Hannibal down. He brings along the blanket that he'd given Hannibal on his first night and sets off as soon as the light is beginning to fade.

The hours on the road pass in silence, Will had turned off his cell hoping to prevent Alana or other people from calling him while in close proximity with Hannibal, with his luck that would be the precise moment that Hannibal regains his voice. He'd love to get chatty with Jack, leaving Will in an awkward situation, he can imagine himself having to try and bluff it out to Jack, *I'm sorry Jack? Hannibal who? Lecter? Nope, never heard of him?*

Instead the only sounds are that of the car wheels and the gentle snuffling of the dogs. They stop twice once at two in the morning, so he drink coffee from a thermos and let the dogs out and once at half past seven, to stretch his legs and move about. Both times Hannibal refuses to get out of the car, unwilling to risk a scene on the road, Will leaves him be.

It's almost three in the afternoon when he finally pulls up outside his father's house, it looks in better shape than it has done in ages and Will feels a shard of guilt that his dad has repainted his house by himself and Will never went home to help him.

Hannibal is asleep in the passenger seat, long limbs cuccooning his body and his head ducked low, *preserving heat? Will wonders, or trying to remain unnoticed.*

He opens the doors and the dogs stream out to answer calls of nature and sniff around in a yard they haven't visited for more than three years. Leaving the dogs to their own devices he opens the passenger doors and leans in to shake Hannibal awake.

Hannibal jolts under his hands and Will pulls back to give him his space to come around in his own time without feeling threatened.

"Hey, we are here," he says, "at long last, eh?"

"Hey, boy." his father's voice booms out over the yard and Hannibal seems to come to life in an instant, rolling away from Will and scrambling out of the car and bolting in the direction of the road.

"Hannibal," Will gasps, diving after him and managing to catch him around the ankles, dragging them both onto the floor. "It's just my Daddy, just like I said, nothing bad." Hannibal struggles violently and Will is genuinely afraid that he's going to have actually get physical with Hannibal to prevent him from running off. He sits on Hannibal's hips and let's his weight weigh the other man down until Hannibal wears himself out. His father stands just out of reach as Hannibal claws at the ground and writhes in a desperate attempt to get free, the lack of noise from Hannibal makes the whole situation more frightening to Will. He knows that a 'normal' person would be screaming.

Eventually Hannibal slows and lies still.

“Hey,” Will says as calmly as he can, deliberately not leaning forwards, not trusting Hannibal to not lash out. He's learned the hard way not to push Hannibal when he feels cornered. “You're ok, Hannibal are you listening?”

There is a long pause before Hannibal nods.

“If I get up can you promise not to run? Come on, let's go inside and get a drink, hot chocolate?” he offers in the hopes of tempting Hannibal indoors. There isn't a response.

“Willy, I think perhaps id better bring the drinks out here and give everybody a chance to calm down and we can make some introductions. Will that be alright, young man?”

Will mimes ‘young man?’ back at his Father who makes a ‘later’ gesture at him. With his Dad absent for the time being he returns his attention to Hannibal.

“It's alright, did he startle you? He's a complete softy you know?” Will half chuckles remembering, “Won't do anything to anyone, hard worker and tough talker but not much a fighter.”

After a few long minutes, Hannibal's gasping breaths ease off into a more natural rhythm and the tense muscles of his back relax.

“I'm gonna move,” Will tells him, shifting slightly to crouch next to Hannibal, ready to leap back into action if he should be required to.

Hannibal simply rolls over onto his back, lies still breathing a bit harder than is natural and looks up at the sky, avoiding Wills gaze.

“Hey, boys.” Will starts as a mug appears in his peripheral vision, “Hot drink for everyone, are we going to sit on the grass or make a move to the porch, hmmm?” He offers a hand down to both of them, “I'm Billy, Willy's Daddy. I presume he told you that though, right son?”

Hannibal nods but still avoids making any kind of eye contact.

“Well you're not what I was expecting, I have to say.” Billy rubs a hand over his greying beard, “Well, let's all head into the house shall we, boys?”

Clutching his mug in one hand and pulling Hannibal onto his feet with the other, Will follows his father. The dogs trot alongside them and Hannibal reaches out to touch the rough ruff of fur on Winston's neck. When they reach the house Billy pauses and grabs the blanket of the passenger seat of the car.

“Alright, boys, let's be having you.”

The inside of the house hasn't changed a bit and it relaxed Will to see the same pictures on the walls as there have ever been, the same rugs on the floors, like the house that time forgot.

“Sit, sit.” Billy chides, then presses the blanket back over Hannibal's shoulders. “You want some cake?” There isn't a response but it doesn't even slow the older man down as he heads

of to go and apparently knock every piece of crockery he owns together in the kitchen. #

“Feel better?”

Hannibal pulls his blanket up higher and shifts his leg so that Winston is touching his knee and nods.

Billy comes back and sets down a plate of sweets before dropping into a chair and rubbing at his knee. “Never get old, Willy.”

“The alternative is dead, Daddy.”

Hannibal looks between them both wide eyed.

“No one is dying today, son.” Billy soothes. “I guess you’d like to watch some TV while we get things sorted, then? Without waiting for a response he begins to fiddle with the old set that had been there when Will had left the police force more than a decade ago. After a few moments something brightly coloured and overly cheery fills the screen and Billy nods satisfied. “Willy, why don't you help an old man with the washing up?”

Following his father out into the kitchen, “why are you setting him up like he's a kid.”

“That's what he seems like, Willy. He seems like a lost kid. Look at all his behaviours, I might not have your brain thingy, but I did raise a child, all on my own. I know the signs of a young one in distress.”

“He's older than I am.”

“He's a hurt kid in his head, Willy. You know it too. Don't know why you're acting like you don't behave the exact same way around him. He's got a comfort blanket for heaven's sake.”

“That's-” Will starts before trailing off, “Oh, god Daddy.”

His father regards him, out of eyes that are a complete match for his own. “Yes, boy?”

“You're right.”

“Often am.”

It's nighttime, and he's just finishing up putting sheets on the camp bed in what used to be his bedroom once they finally stopped moving around and Will was able to have a space of his own, before he feels able to start gently questioning Hannibal.

“Hey, buddy,” he asks, “how old are you?” He's praying for forty six, absolutely praying for it. As happens so often in his life, they go unanswered, when Hannibal turns to him and holds up all ten fingers then follow it by holding up a single digit.

“Eleven?” Will confirms, appalled.

Hannibal nods.

Chapter 5

As soon as Hannibal is asleep, Buster dozing on the camp bed next to him, Will grabs his laptop and begins to research. *Can trauma cause total regression?* He knows that abused children often take up the characteristics of much younger children, like bed wetting or thumb sucking. *But this? Is this normal?* What he learns doesn't comfort him, at all. Most suffers are children who have suffered immense traumas some have dissociative disorders or other mental illnesses. A common theme that he uncovers is that there is normally a trigger that sets off the regression.

"What was it?" he asks Hannibal, "what scared you so badly? What was done to you?" He sits in the darkened room, the only illumination from his laptop and worries at the dry skin near his thumb nail with his teeth, trying to decide on an appropriate course of action.

The darkness greets him as the only response as his laptop goes into power saving mode and plunges them all into darkness.

The next morning he allows his father to distract Hannibal with a promise of baking cookies and uses the free time to dig through the old files to try and work out what's happening.

They cut an odd scene Hannibal and his father, Billy handling a mute 'eleven' year old with the same amount of grace and skill that he had when Will himself had been an angry confused boy, lashing out at world in his inability to shut out the world inside his head.

He sets his laptop down on the kitchen table, Mable one of his oldest dogs settles onto his feet with a contented sigh, he can hear his father directing Hannibal on cookie manufacture in low murmured tones, all in all it's the kind of peaceful atmosphere he needs to regroup of the revelations of the past day, of the difficulties of the last week, of the long painful separation he's endured these past two years.

Logging on he pulls up all the files they gathered on Hannibal when he was a suspect and begins to trawl through the huge amounts of data to find something, anything, that might explain their current predicament. He looks for anything that correlates to the current situation. Lunchtime comes and goes and in the mid afternoon Hannibal appears at his elbow and offers a wonky decorated cookie with a shy smile. Behind Hannibal's shoulder his Father glared at him and mines 'Eat it!'.

"Wow, thanks, Hannibal. This looks great." It doesn't but he'd rather be gutted again than admit it, who knows perhaps he would be. He takes a big bite, "Oh." He continues surprised and relieved, it tastes much, much better than it looks. "This is good, really good. Thank you!" Hannibal beams and bounces off to help with the washing up, or more accurately to dump huge amounts of water onto the floor. Will smiles and goes back to his files.

It takes another two hours, by which time he has a numb butt, a stiff neck and a raging headache, but he finally finds something that fits. Hannibal had been mute as a child for a period of years before being adopted to relatives in France.

Finally he has some clues, some trauma had sent Hannibal into muteness before and now another trauma has caused the symptom to resurface. It's a relief, if Hannibal had recovered as a child and gone on to become an, arguably, successful adult then there was hope for a similar recovery now. Still it firms up his ideas for his next step. Shuddering with dread he opens up his email and finds a contact he'd hoped not to ever have to use.

Dear Bedelia, he starts, then goes back and deletes the dear. She's anything but. Briefly he outlines his desire to discuss a mutual acquaintance of theirs. He tries to be vague enough that he'll be able to explain it away if it ever ends up in a document folder marked 'exhibit a'. She's a smart lady, she'll be able to read between the lines, it's all in her court now as to whether she gets back in contact or if he'll need to be more direct.

He shuts down the laptop and stretches feeling his back pop as he does so. His father looks up at him from his place on the sofa where he's half watching some cartoon that had Hannibal transfixed. "Done, Willy?" He asks, "perhaps we can all go for a walk? I know the dogs could do with a stretch of the legs and some people," he pokes Hannibal in the side, "could do with some fresh air and a break from the screen."

"Alright," he agrees. He pulls his shoes on and smiles at Hannibal's obvious, though silent protests. "We won't go far, I know your feet are still bad. Can I take another look at them later?"

It is a brief walk, the area around his father's house is dark and wooded and he can feel Hannibal's unease like a living thing.

They stand not far from the house and throw sticks until the dogs are panting and Will notices Hannibal beginning to do the side to side rock that he now knows means his feet hurt.

He nods to Daddy or Hannibal's head and ushers everyone back indoors. Hannibal sinks down on the sofa and pulls his blanket over his legs, clearly hiding his feet from Will and trying to avoid the necessity of a bandage change.

Will prevaricates by wiping of the dog's paws and tidying up a little before dropping down in front of Hannibal. Crouching in front of him, he makes sure to be looking up, trying to be less of a threat.

"Can I at least check them? I know they hurt, but it'll be worse if they get infected. I can't take you to a doctor, not without losing you."

He can see at once it was the wrong thing to say, sees the raw panic in Hannibal's eyes.

Hannibal tugs the blanket away and lifts his feet up, clearly offering them as a sacrifice to remain with Will. Will tries to find the words to explain, hates himself for Hannibal's obvious trembling.

"It's ok," he says, feeling absolutely wretched. "I didn't mean to frighten you. I just... I need to keep your feet clean and I know they hurt and I'm sorry about that but I have to do this."

He works as quickly as he can trying not to hear the little hitches in Hannibal's breathing as he hurts him, just tries to keep his hands steady and work as quickly as he can without jolting the sensitive appendages.

Despite his clear exhaustion Hannibal won't go to bed, he sits up clutching Buster as close to Will as he can get without trying to climb in his lap.

Guilt ridden Will allows himself to be used as a human security blanket, as Hannibal gets more and more exhausted his body sags more and more heavily into Will's.

Will accepts the weight and throws an arm across Hannibal's shoulders hoping to get back to the atmosphere of safety he'd destroyed with thoughtless words only a few hours before.

Hannibal sleeps for about an hour before he wakes himself and half the state up shrieking, loud enough to wake the dead.

Will rubs his back and soothes him, while the dogs whine and howl and his father hovers anxiously.

Eventually Hannibal drops off to sleep again.

The tension in the house dissipates a little.

Hannibal screams himself awake again barely forty minutes later. And the whole cycle continues.

By ten o'clock in the morning, Will feels the weight of every single one of his thirty nine years. His eyes itch with tiredness and his limbs ache with it. Hannibal is finally in a deeper sleep, he's apparently exhausted himself as well as everybody else and Will has never been more grateful for anything in his life.

"I'm going to go to the pharmacy," Will slurs out, words running with his fatigue. "I need some more stuff for his feet, better bandages and make some antibiotics if I can get them. Just in case we need them. Some proper painkillers for him."

"Don't be long," Billy says.

And Will hears all the words left unsaid, don't crash. Don't be gone when Hannibal wakes up. Don't run off now things are hard, like your mother did.

"I'll come back," he says addressing the most important one, "I'm not the one who stays away."

The pharmacy smells sterile and the lights are too bright, Will walks down the narrow aisle grabbing anything that looks potentially useful, vitamin tablets, sleep aids, stuff for cleaning wounds that goes in the bath, some kind of oral pain killer that tastes of oranges. He pays an obvious curious clerk and bundles everything into the car.

He's almost home when his phone rings. *Shit. Bedelia, shit, shit, fuck and shit.*

“Hello.”

“Hello.”

“Bedelia,” he says pulling into the drive and setting the car in park. “How are you?”

“You don't care about that.” She says. *No*, he thinks, *I don't*. “You want to know about Hannibal.”

“I have a theory,” he says just in case she has gone to the police and this is some kind of recording or trap. “He used to live in France, right.”

“Yes,” she replies, sounding a little less guarded. *Good*. “And Italy.”

“Italy?” Will says, leaning his head back against the headrest and taking off his glasses.

“Yes, as a young man.”

“Ok, do you have any notes on anything he said to you about his life then?”

“I.. might do.” She hesitates.

“Great,” Will says, determined just to steamroller over any questions, “ if you just send them across to me. You have my email, right?”

“Y-yes?”

“Great, I'll expect them by? Tonight? Tomorrow? Tomorrow latest.”

“Y-YES, yes. Ok.”

“Great.” He repeats and hangs up.

He gathers everything up and gets out of the car, just in time to hear a shout and the dogs barking.

Shit, shit, shit, shit.

He drops everything and makes a run for the house.

There is a broken plate on the floor, and Will can see his father's irritated face. He relaxes. Irritated not terrified. So Hannibal is being a brat not trying to murder and eat the neighbors.

“Might have your card?”

Or not. He thinks, before the meaning of the spoken words hit him like a punch.

“Hannibal.” He breathes, thankfully loudly enough to stop the resident psycho dead in his tracks.” Don't you dare make tacos out of my Daddy.”

Tacos? His father mouths and he shrugs, mouthing, *later*, straight back.

“Your.. Father? Ahhh, hello there.”

Will rolls his eyes and moves across to get between them. His instinct to wrap Hannibal in a hug. Just to hold him close.

“Where am I?”

Or they can do awkward conversations, that's fine too. “Daddy's house, Louisiana.”

“Ah.”

Will waits for more but nothing seems to be forthcoming. “Do you remember what happened.”

A shadow passes over Hannibal's face and Will can see the shutters coming down in his mind.

“It's like you were a kid.” Will says hesitantly.

Hannibal nods, “yes,” he agrees, “a boy, just a little boy. I was supposed to protect him. He's not supposed to be out.”

“Be..out?”

“I'm the more...” Hannibal waves a hand, “dominant personality, I deal with the strains of life and the boy lives in the peace that should always have been.”

“So where were you?”

“I don't know.”

“Where is he? The kid? Hannibal Junior.”

Hannibal grimaces, clearly not enjoying the name. “I don't know we have been torn apart.”

Will's confusion must show on his face as after a moment Hannibal continues, “ordinarily, I am aware of him as a presence. Mostly benign just a childlike wonder or glee at the beauties of the world, occasionally as a sense of fear or frustration at cruelty or ugliness.”

“And the rude.”

“I protected him, and through him our sister. Her..” he pauses again and Will doesn't know if he's ever seen Hannibal so uncertain, so lost, “essence, the memory of her. The way that I could not defend us when we were young.”

“You were there even then? You remember? Being a child?”

Hannibal hums, “the boy does. I do a little through him. He remembers his parents and life before he lost them. Remembers his sister and the safety and security of family. Before it was all lost to him. Before I existed.”

“I'm trying to understand. I want to.”

Hannibal's eyes dart left and he looks at Will in the way that had always made Will feel awkward before. It's the soft expression when the shadows around Hannibal roll back and he looks at Will with hearts in his eyes. “I know,” he says.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!